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Four head spaces on Espace

CATHERINE POGONAT

COURTESY OF RADIO-CANADA

ANDRÉ RHÉAUME

COURTESY OF RADIO-CANADA

CLAUDE RAJOTTE

COURTESY OF RADIO-CANADA

DAN BEHRMAN

THE GAZETTE

Espace Musique, Radio-Canada's revamped music-only network, offers a wide variety of musical spirits. These hosts help shape the sound of the station

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Kaleidoscopic musical tastes make **Catherine Pogonat's** program (Friday at 10 a.m.) charmingly unpredictable. Pogonat carved her rep as host of the Bandeapart.fm weekend overnight show, which she helped develop for Radio-Canada when she was a student in Moncton, N.B.

Now she hosts a weekly two-hour rendez-vous with noted francophone singers or groups – from Dumas to Michel Rivard to Loco Locass – to play their favourite music, from childhood to formative years to today. Embarrassed chuckles often greet her requests for a "chanson velcro" or "chanson honte" (both guilty pleasures). The guests, she says, "are astonished at the psychological portrait" their choices paint.

Pogonat, 27, is a Montreal music muse, her assertive questions demanding candour. Here listeners discover that members of Loco Locass and Les Cowboys Fringants bumped into each other at Archambault ... buying each other's acclaimed new albums! (Amour Oral and La Grand-Messe, respectively)

"There were times when the promises (of the local music scene) didn't always deliver, but now you sense something real happening. The number of groups and albums I'm able to listen to now is really exciting – we're in a period of an enormous amount of creativity.

"I find it fascinating to understand the inspirations behind the music we talk about today. That allows me to discover old jazz, the beginnings of the chanson française, blues, musique actuelle, and expand my musical horizons. It comes naturally and hits a wide range of listeners, from adolescents to older listeners of 60.

"All the artists on the program, even those arriving in a hurry, worried about filling two hours – within 20 minutes they're into the game. It's rare in today's radio that you have a chance to share two hours with an artist and their inspirations. It's often surprising, sometimes hallucinatory. For the artists, it's like a musical psychoanalysis, so maybe in our small way we help them farther understand themselves."

Seriously folks, what's Pogonat's preferred "chanson velcro"? She thinks long and hard. "Give Me One More Chance by the Jackson 5. They're my favourite kitsch music, as well as Elvis Presley's Suspicious Minds."

André Rhéaume has opened ici Vancouver with the sounds of waves lapping the shore for the last 22 years. Categorized as "Jazz" on Espace Musique, his program (Monday to Thursday, 10 p.m. to midnight) is a world apart. He says he prefered the term "Universal Music." Few have Rhéaume's quiet curiosity, catholic tastes and dulcet whispery tones.

Rhéaume, 56, worked at CHOM-FM at its birth, was involved with Robert Charlebois and the Ville Emard Blues Band, and the station owner Geoff Stirling "wanted someone who knew the local scene. So I played Léo Ferré and Gilles Vigneault mixed with Gentle Giant."

He continues to hold the free-form torch: "If I wasn't on radio, I'd be doing the same thing at home, playing and looking for music," he says from his Vancouver home overlooking the Pacific.

"I start at 9 a.m. getting in this mood and I never really leave it. The show never stops, 52 weeks a year. My colleagues wonder how I do it, but it feeds me. I'd miss it if it wasn't there. It's like a long walk, you start and then you pick up speed, and it flows. I'm looking outside at the garden, from where I take walks, and there's thousands of CDs surrounding me. It might sound crazy, but all this speaks to me.

"I come from the musicians' side. I'm on radio because of the music. I'm not interested in a career as an announcer – I'm a presenter, a producer, and crazy in love with music. I assemble everything at home from my own collection. I have this big suitcase next to me, where I keep my own microphone, headphones, books, magazines and discs. I bring it to Radio-Canada every day – I don't have a team, I'm alone in the studio.

"I have no problem mixing Kelly Joe Phelps with Alice Coltrane with Vietnamese music. I like variety, but by now I can recognize a stupid mix. The assemblage has to be done the right way."

When **Claude Rajotte** – who spent 17 years with MusiquePlus (and years on CHOM) – was offered a prime Friday spot (8 to 11 p.m.) on Espace Musique, he "insisted on doing everything myself because my mixes are very important, and you can't screw up the mix. I practice at home, I'm maniacal about my mixes. I do them absolutely alone, that's the way I've worked all my life."

While he helps command Bandeapart.fm, he says, "The main reason I'm at Espace is doing my three-hour show where I have no limits. I'm not categorized in one style. It could be samba or metal – if it's good, I'll play it, particularly les tendences modernes. And I'd much rather play music than talk about it."

He hails "a certain quality" in local album production: "We've caught up, above all, in techno music with Les Abdigradationnistes, Jérôme Minière, Amon Tobin. There's international calibre here."

Rajotte enjoys the hermetic, nocturnal life: "I don't get up before noon, but I don't go out much. I stay home, do my radio show, listen to my discs. What I bring to radio here is the musical equivalent of international news bulletins. I'm a citizen of the world."

Dan Behrman's world-music show (debuting in April on Espace Musique after a whirlwind trial by fire over the holiday season), comes after 14 years at CKUT with Just an Immigrant. It marks the first time he's broadcast in his native French – in a distinctively deep, smoky voice – since he started in the U.S. reporting for French pirate radio in 1978.

"Some friends had stolen a French army FM transmitter, asked me to prepare radio shows on cassettes, and I sent them 120 minutes from New York per month. They had the transmitter in a van and drove around Paris and the suburbs, broadcasting at random on government frequencies."

A year later he discovered free-form listener-sponsored station WFMU (né 1966), starting with a weekly hour called Music from Other Places. "Basically we played rock 'n' roll and blues and whatever ethnic material I could find – which at the time was largely unavailable." He expanded to two three-hour shows a week, with live guests.

"The more unknown the music, the better I felt, because I had an edge and I was contributing something new."

Behrman moved to Montreal in 1991 (he's a programmer for Equipe Spectra's jazz and FrancoFolies festivals), and heard of McGill's CKUT. "The no-programming type of programming," he recalls. "In the States I called myself 'The Immigrant.' Here I called myself 'Just an immigrant.' Music from everywhere but home. What is home when you're an immigrant? You don't have one.

"So it's really music from everywhere, including wherever home may be."

Shows | Dial in the world

CONTINUED FROM D1

Dorothée Berryman holds popular dinnertime soirées on weekends (Espace Musique, Saturday and Sunday 6 to 8 p.m.).

Stanley Péan lends a classic Blue Note flavour to Espace Musique's noontime jazz hour (Monday to Friday).

On **Éclectique** (CIBL, Wednesday, 7 to 8:30 p.m.), Jean-Luc Cruicifix voyages from trad to avant.

Escales, hosted by Michel Dupuis (CIBL, Monday, 8:30 to 10 p.m.), ranges from musette to classic jazz and beyond.

Cinamen (CIBL, Thursday, 7 to 8:30 p.m.) is Sylvain Fortier's wacky avant-gardist realm of prog jazz fusion.

Jazz Euphorium (CKUT, Wednesday, 8 to 10 p.m.) alternates DJs and, thus, tastes.

And, of course, Katie Malloch has hosted the superb **Jazz Beat** (CBC Radio One, 88.5 FM, Sunday, 8 p.m.), including live gigs and interviews, since 1985.

WORLD MUSIC

Basses Fréquences lives up to its subtitle "Reggae King," with Richard Lafrance (CIBL, Saturday, 8:30 to 10 p.m.), who also takes over the late, great Daniel Péré's tradition, **Rhythms International** (Mix96, Sunday, 8 to 10 p.m.)

Le Soul, "Créole sensations," features Ronnie D (CIBL, Saturday, midnight).

Funky Gringo (CISM, Thursday, 9 p.m.), is Jean-Philippe Emond's meander through reggae, compa, Haitian music.

Latin Music Mondays (CKUT, 9 to 11:15 a.m.) kicks off the week in fine style.

Voix tropicale (9 a.m.) and **La Rumba du samedi** (1 p.m.) start CISM's Saturday, followed at 5 with a night of **hip-hop and trip-hop**.

ECLECTIC

Etc Rock (CIBL, Thursday, 8:30 to 10 p.m.) is Roger Tanguay's "opium du pop," classics and rarities keying on Britain.

Les Portugaises ensablées is billed as "Franco manique, electro tabarnaque" from Nicolas Ollivjrak (CIBL, Tuesday, 2 to 4 p.m.).

Folk, country and traditional: **Mike Regenstreif** is Montreal's pipeline to folk and country (CKUT, Thursday, 9 to 11:15 a.m.).

Tradosphere (CIBL, Monday, 7 to 8:30 p.m.) looks back to the future.

Sabot d'Denver, Richard Colt Bélanger (CIBL, Saturday, 5:30 to 8:30 a.m.), is terrific trucking music.

As for rockabilly and trash: **Rock thérapie** (CISM, Monday, 9 to 10 p.m.) offers heavy doses of surf, garage.

CISM goes hard rock on Wednesday, starting with punkish **Barricade** (7 p.m.), **Montreal en flammes** (by Avi Elbaz), followed by **Get down et défonce** (9 p.m.) and **Le grimoire du métal** (10 p.m.)

On **Instantanéik** (CISM, Friday, 7 p.m.) host David Rioux programs half the show from free and legal downloads.

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

CISM | Reaches from St. Jérôme to border

CONTINUED FROM D1

The problem was radio, and the solution turned out to be digital technology.

"Now there's a generation that was raised fed-up with the same old crap on commercial radio," says Roussy. Young people from 16 to 25 don't depend on it for new or audacious music anymore, preferring the Internet, MP3 downloading, the weekly alt press, satellite radio and stations like CISM.

"Commercial radio will have to change or die," he says. "Radio like ours will always survive because we're not part of a monolith. We appeal to people who want to hear good, new stuff. Montreal is the perfect city to find it, because there's so many bands you can see for five bucks or so."

"Now there's a generation that was raised fed-up with the same old crap on commercial radio."
Martin Roussy

CISM, which began on campus in 1985 and got its FM license in 1990, became more "user-friendly" two years ago, situating itself between "mainstream" and "underground" with three programming cycles: morning and daytime, drive-home and hit parade, and an eclectic mix of nightly shows. The switch stemmed from a realization that they had some power – 10,000 watts, said to be the world's most powerful francophone college signal, spreading to St. Jérôme and the U.S. border – in exposing bands and discs in any language.

The station's 100-odd DJs (not necessarily students) make the choices and their voices are more unvarnished, enthusiastic and colourful than cool, making for consistently entertaining listening.

"We told ourselves that we can do radio that's professional as much as we can be. We don't make salaries, but we're totally free to play what we want. We realized the big reach we have.

"Montreal is the most European city in North America," Roussy says. Reminded of its weakness for British art-rock in the early 1970s, he laughs: "LED-esque? (Montreal has) a more cosmic sound for sure." That's why Malajube "is the Montreal sound but in French. It's my favourite record of the past year, period.

"We might play Malajube a dozen times a week, which is a lot. We're not like commercial radio, where a song plays every two hours to the detriment of everything else. Once or twice a day maximum, so people don't get fed up with it."

The DJs inevitably lapse into half-hearted pleas of "Pardonnez l'anglicisme," but this being Montreal it comes with the territory. The station buzzes with bilingual music in a cocktail of genres. And it runs a cute spot featuring the familiar, laconic voice of a Nova Scotia hip-hop enigré in Le Plateau:

"Salut tout le monde. Je suis, uh, je m'appelle Buck 65, soixante-cinq, et vous écoutez CISM – pas mal, pas mal de tout."

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MARIE FRANCE COALLIER THE GAZETTE

Martin Roussy selects discs from the music library at alternative radio station CISM on the campus of l'Université de Montréal.

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